

State buys homes in 202 path

[By Doug Murphy](#)

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The South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team meets next week to continue studying the placement of the Loop 202 Freeway.

One of the topics of discussion will be impacts on Ahwatukee Foothills and South Mountain Park the Arizona Department of Transportation assumes will occur if the 10-lane freeway were built along Pecos Road.

Among the changes is that an estimated 255 homes along Pecos Road in Ahwatukee Foothills would have to be purchased and demolished if the freeway were built today and an estimated \$2 million in city property tax revenue would be lost with the homes.

The meeting will be held from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Oct. 4 in the Student Union Building at South Mountain Community College, 7050 S. 24th St.

While no final decision has been made on if the freeway will be built along Pecos Road ADOT has been buying property along the corridor for several years, partly to prevent land speculation and partly to buy undeveloped property instead of more expensive homes later.

Last year the state paid \$1.9 million for four lots in the custom Foothills 80 development near 31st and Cedarwood lanes.

Since then the state has paid out an additional \$6.6 million for 15 other homes and empty lots, including 11 in the Foothills 40 area and four along Redwood Lane and 26th Street, according to data provided by ADOT.

The last purchase was a home in the 17000 block of South 27th Drive Aug. 10, where the state paid a Sausalito, Calif., man \$528,700 for his house that is in the freeway's right of way.

ADOT officials have made it clear that since no official decision has been made to build the freeway along Pecos Road, the state will only buy homes in the case of a hardship or unique circumstance.

The freeway was first proposed and approved by voters in 1985, but a lack of money put the project on hold for years. During that time the state and city could not prevent developers from building within the right of way. In 2001, ADOT formed the Citizens Advisory Team to help update the old plan.

At the same time, ADOT decided to design a wider freeway than first envisioned, so that homes that were at one time outside of the freeway's right of way would now be potentially up for condemnation if construction progresses.

A draft environmental impact statement will be released sometime early next year, followed by a public comment period and followed by the final route decision and final environmental impact statement.

Supporters say that a freeway from I-10 and the Loop 202 Santan interchange at Pecos Road going west around Ahwatukee Foothills and through South Mountain Park to reconnect with I-10 near 55th Avenue is a critical element of the Valley's freeway system and required to prevent gridlock on freeways and surface streets.

But opponents point to health concerns with a freeway so close to Ahwatukee Foothills schools. Some feel a freeway that connects to I-10 further south and reconnects further west would do more to help alleviate traffic generated in Pinal County and in the far West Valley.

For more information, visit

www.azdot.gov/Highways/Valley_Freeways/Loop_202/South_Mountain/index.asp.

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